LIFESTREAM

On Livestreaming One's Life

Dedicated to those who made this possible

Introduction

In 2019, I livestreamed everything I did for 365 days straight in the "Michael Gerry Live Stream".

After the project, I set out to create this resource to help others lifestream.

Format

This book contains 100 sections on lifestreaming.

The first 50 are informational.

The second 50 are answers to questions.

All questions were collected from members of the Michael Gerry Live Stream's audience.

I've reworded some questions to honor what I believe their intended meanings to be, and I've left others alone for the same reason.

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Part I: How to Lifestream

Definitions

1. Livestream

A *livestream* is a form of media that is broadcast in real time over the internet.

2. Lifestream

A *lifestream* is a video and audio livestream of one's life.

These more specific criteria may also apply:

1. A lifestream is continuous or almost continuous

2. A lifestream broadcasts most of one's important activities

3. A lifestream lasts for at least one day

Elements

3. Mechanics

The *mechanics* of lifestreaming involve capturing, processing, and delivering audio and visual data to a destination.

The elements required to do this are a camera, encoder, power source, internet connection, and electronic connectors.

4. Camera

A lifestream *camera* should output audio and "clean" video, meaning free of icons and overlays.

5. Encoder

An *encoder* converts the camera's output to a desired format and delivers it to the destination.

6. Power source

The *power source* must be sufficient to run critical components for a stream's desired duration.

7. Internet Connection

Internet connection must be adequate to transfer encoded data to a destination.

8. Electronic Connectors

Electronic connectors, like cables and wires, transfer power and data to other components.

9. Destination

A *destination* can be either a platform where the audio and visual data becomes viewable as a livestream, or a pre-platform location for additional processing.

Rigs

10. Livestreaming Rigs

Livestreaming rigs can be acquired or configured and may be for livestreaming specific activities, like sleeping.

11. Mobile

A *mobile* livestreaming rig is a device or collection of components designed to be moved around while it captures, encodes, and delivers data to a destination.

An example might include a wide-angle camera with image stabilization, a portable encoder, batteries, and a feature for accessing cellular networks.

12. Stationary

A *stationary* livestreaming rig is a device or collection of components that is designed to stay in one place while it captures, encodes, and delivers data to a destination.

An example might include a webcam, an external microphone, and a computer plugged into both an electrical outlet and wired internet.

13. Configuration

A livestreaming rig can be a *configuration* of components or a singular device, like a smartphone.

With the *configuration* of components into livestreaming rigs, prioritize video and audio quality, reliability, and compatibility with one's activities.

Devices

14. Smartphone

A *smartphone* can be used to livestream, manage active livestreams, and interact with audience members.

Relevant *smartphone* criteria are reliability, processing power, camera quality, and a cellular network with adequate coverage.

15. Computer

A *computer* can be used to livestream and manage one's project as a whole.

Relevant *computer* criteria are reliability, processing power, operating system software compatibility, and portability.

16. Infrared Webcam

An *infrared webcam* with an infrared light source makes "night vision" livestreaming possible.

This can be useful for livestreaming activities that are done in the absence of visible spectrum light.

To make a normal webcam into an *infrared webcam,* remove the infrared filter.

Simple, visual instructions can be found in this video: "How To Make a NIGHT VISION Sleep Stream Webcam".

17. Accessories

A shoulder mount, windscreen, and lens protector can improve livestream quality from a mobile livestreaming rig.

A poncho or large plastic bag can be carried to protect gear from precipitation.

An external microphone may upgrade audio quality for stationary livestreams.

18. Backups

For large-scale, continuous lifestreams, it can be worthwhile to have *backups* of critical or fragile components for more efficient diagnosis and replacement of damaged parts.

Digital

19. Livestream Signal Path

The *livestream signal path* is the digital path that data travels on from the camera to a destination:

Camera › Encoder › Encoder Server › Platform

Adding steps to one's *livestream signal path* can create redundancy and introduce more features:

Camera › Encoder › Encoder Server › Livestreaming Server › Multi-streaming Service › Multiple Platforms

20. Platform

A *platform* is a digital destination where one's livestreams can reach an audience.

Important *platform* criteria for lifestreaming are technological reliability, overall popularity, and content policies.

Additional criteria include whether past streams remain viewable, the availability of content management tools and audience interaction features, algorithmic discoverability, and platform demographics.

21. Livestreaming Server

A *livestreaming server* is a pre-platform destination that can be used to add redundancy and extra features to one's livestreams.

Redundancy is added through broadcasting a "be right back" screen to platforms whenever a disruption occurs earlier in the livestream signal path.

This keeps one's livestreams "live" in the case of equipment failure or lack of internet connection.

Features like chat integrations and animations can be added as well.

Livestreaming servers can be cloud-based or hosted locally and may be custom-developed or acquired pre-made.

22. Software

Video livestreaming *software* allows for the execution of high-quality stationary streams from one's computer.

Screen capture, video editing, and image processing *software* can be used to generate additional content related to one's lifestream project.

Server management *software* may be necessary for managing cloud-based livestreaming servers.

23. Web Services

A multi-streaming *web service* allows a single livestream to be sent to multiple different destinations.

A video conferencing *web service* makes it possible to remotely incorporate people into one's lifestream project.

A TTS or Text To Speech *web service* can verbalize chat messages from platforms.

24. Phone Applications

A video livestreaming *phone application* allows one to livestream from a smartphone.

Streaming platform *phone applications* can make it easier to manage active streams and interact with audiences.

An internet speed test *phone application* can measure the bandwidth of wireless internet connections.

A remote server management *phone application* makes it possible to manage one's livestreaming server from a smartphone.

25. Personal Website

A *personal website* can provide additional information, links, and integrations for one's lifestream project.

It also creates redundancy for the integrity of one's audience, protecting it from events like platform failures and channel deletions.

Execution

26. Practice

Practice livestreaming, with different software and equipment, is the best preparation for lifestreaming.

27. Maintenance

While lifestreaming, it's important to assess one's livestream and livestreaming components regularly to confirm everything is working properly.

28. Optimization

The camera should remain level, stable, and pointed at relevant activities.

In low-light, important activities can be illuminated.

Audience suggestions and notifications may help with the *optimization* and maintenance of one's lifestream.

Practicalities

29. Criteria

The essential criteria for lifestreaming are time, money, equipment, electricity, and internet connection.

Additional life and location factors like relationships and climate are also important.

30. Work

For one's *work* to be compatible with lifestreaming, three criteria are important:

1. Reliable internet access

2. The ability to take a break, at will, to address livestreaming complications

3. The legality and courtesy of livestreaming relevant activities and interactions

31. Consent

Whenever possible, one should introduce their lifestream project and obtain *consent* from all those participating in it.

32. Over-the-phone Interaction

In *over-the-phone interactions*, like voice and video calls, the presence of one's livestream should be announced.

33. One-on-one Appointments

For *one-on-one appointments*, like haircuts or doctor's visits, it's a good idea to call in advance and obtain permission to livestream the encounter.

34. Privacy

Privacy while lifestreaming can exist in text-messaging and activities kept off-camera.

35. Copyright

The most important *copyright* policies to adhere to while lifestreaming are those of the platforms one is livestreaming on.

36. Risk

Lifestreaming increases one's *risk* of experiencing assault, theft, hacking, and legal repercussions.

It also creates potential for relational and perspective changes, wealth and fame, and social ostracization.

Finances

37. Costs

The *costs* of lifestreaming include equipment acquisition, recurring services, and necessary living expenses.

38. Profit

Because livestreaming costs can remain fixed as the audience gets larger, the potential for *profit* increases with the scale of a lifestream's engagement.

39. Revenue

Donation and membership platforms allow audience members to support one's lifestream directly.

Merchandise, exclusive content, and sponsorships can also be used to generate *revenue* while lifestreaming.

Engagement

40. Interaction

Interaction, through personal or group communication, strengthens one's audience relationships.

41. Community

Establishing a place for interaction beyond one's lifestreams can build *community* and improve audience experience.

42. Clips

Entertaining or important sections from past livestreams can be posted as *clips* to highlight noteworthy moments and reach a wider audience.

43. Archive

An *archive* of past livestreams can provide context for one's lifestream project and create more opportunities for audience engagement.

Including date, time, and project information in livestream titles adds to the organization of an *archive*.

Relevant thumbnails and timestamps can be used to provide more information about the contents of past livestreams.

44. Project

Factors like the length, continuity, and content of one's lifestream *project* can affect its potential for engagement.

Clear descriptions, organization, and artwork help others determine their interest in one's *project*.

2021

45. Mobile Lifestreaming Rig

A modern *mobile lifestreaming rig* consists of an action camera, a signal bonding video encoder, two 50,000mAh batteries, 2–4 cellular signal modems, cables, and a backpack.

For an example configuration, see the video "Lifestream Backpack Example".

46. Price

The *price* of lifestreaming in 2021, in addition to living expenses, is about $2,500 for equipment and $500 per month for services.

47. YouTube

YouTube is the best platform for lifestreaming in 2021 because it's reliable, popular, and has reasonable content policies.

YouTube also has a permanent archive for past livestreams that are less than 12 hours in length, and it has on-platform editing for past livestreams under 6 hours in length.

48. Copyright on YouTube

Copyright on YouTube is enforced through copyright claims of three different severities:

1. Low-level claims leave content visible but redirect revenue to the owners of the copyrighted material

2. Mid-level claims block visibility of content containing copyrighted material

3. High-level claims, or strikes, may affect one's streaming privileges and can lead to channel deletion

Low-level and mid-level claims often come from songs.

High-level "strikes" are the result of livestreaming about 15 minutes of clear audio from professionally produced and copyrighted media.

49. Digital Tools

Modern *digital tools* for lifestreaming include Open Broadcast Software for livestreaming, Restream.io for multi-streaming, PayPal.me for donations, and Patreon for audience membership.

50. Lifestreaming

Lifestreaming in 2021 is demanding and complicated, but it's also full of opportunities for those willing to pioneer the space.

Part II: Questions About a 365 Day Lifestream

Genesis

51. How did you get the idea of doing the lifestream?

I got the idea from a conversation about a video called "How Streaming My Life for a Week Destroyed Me".

52. Motivation? The reason behind it?

The motivation came from the chance to be the first person to livestream their entire life for a year straight.

The reason I did it is that I felt I was in the right place to attempt something like that, and I thought it would be a cool experience.

53. Were you going through something when you decided to do this project?

Isolation and intoxication

54. At what point did you feel like, "This is it! I am doing something right with this"?

I felt like "This is it!" as soon as I started thinking about doing the project, and I felt like "I am doing something right with this" almost the entire time I was doing it.

55. Were you expecting to get a lot of people watching your lifestream?

Yes, but I felt the execution itself was the most important part.

56. When you first decided to stream, what were your initial fears?

I feared I'd achieve everything I wanted while lifestreaming and life afterwards would be a disappointment.

Being Watched

57. Is it hard to do normal things while there are a lot of eyes looking at you?

It can be if you think about them.

58. Have you ever changed your behavior because of your viewers?

Yes

59. Did you enjoy the idea of people watching you or was this just something no one else did?

I enjoyed the idea of people watching me, but I mostly just wanted to be the first person to do it.

60. Did you feel safer during the project simply because you knew that someone was always looking out for you?

I felt somewhat safer knowing that others were looking out for me, but sometimes that same knowledge made me feel more vulnerable.

61. What was the scariest moment you had with any viewers?

The scariest moment I had with a viewer was an abnormal exchange of messages preceding a trip, coincidentally, to the same place where that person claimed to live.

62. How did you deal with the lack of privacy? Especially in the REAL PRIVATE moments.

The REAL PRIVATE moments for me were personal conversations and quiet time alone.

Sometimes, I dealt with them through attempting to ignore the lifestream, and other times I dealt with them through messaging others or writing about how I felt in a journal.

Lifestyle

63. Do you think living on camera for one year hindered anything in your life? (Dates, jobs, etc.)

I think living on camera for a year hindered a lot of things, including dates and jobs.

Most notably, it hindered spontaneity, because I knew that I was going to be doing the project for 365 days.

64. On most days we see you at one of your computers; how much of this is related to the lifestream?

Most of the time I spent at the computer was related to the lifestream, but some of it was for indulgence of personal interests as well.

65. For the majority of the lifestream you 'ignore' the audience and carry on as if you weren't lifestreaming. What led you to decide on this approach, assuming it was deliberate?

When I first imagined the project, I thought it would be best to have no chat, so the experience would be authentic.

In practice, I found the chat to be interesting and a vital addition to the experience.

Over the course of the year, I fluctuated in the amount of time I'd spend interacting, however.

At times, the lack of interaction was incidental, and at other times it was intentional.

When it was intentional, the motivation came from wanting to live and portray a more "normal" life.

66. How long did it take for it to feel like it was a normal part of your life?

It took about five months for it to feel like a normal part of life.

Relationships

67. How did your family/friends feel about the project? Did they react the way you thought?

Most family members felt pride, fear, or confusion about the project.

Most friends generally felt intrigued or optimistic about it, but some felt irritation as well.

If anything, I was pleasantly surprised with their reactions.

68. Did you feel isolated doing this project?

Yes, but I also felt like a part of something bigger.

69. What did streaming your life 24/7 teach you about your friendships?

Streaming life 24/7 taught me that friends want what's best for one another.

70. How did you convince your friends to stream with you?

I just told them about the project and most of them initially wanted to be a part of it.

Others were indifferent or wary, and I tried to respect those feelings.

71. Do you think you missed anything important when interacting with others this year because they didn't want to be fully open with you on the lifestream?

Maybe, but think I had every important interaction I needed to have.

72. What contribution did Harley make to the stream?

Harley was a Silver Lab-Doberman mix dog that joined the project about halfway through the year, and he contributed entertainment, lightheartedness, and affection to the stream.

The Mental Game

73. Was there a point where you wanted to quit ahead of time, and if so, what made you persevere? What kept you motivated to continue the project for a year besides that you set a goal?

I wanted to quit in July, but I persevered because I said that I would do it for a year.

Besides the goal, curiosity kept me motivated to continue the project.

74. How does knowledge of being seen 24/7 affect your psyche?

It exhausts it.

75. How often were you upset with comments in the YouTube chat or on the channel when they were critical of your actions?

Twice, that I can remember.

76. What was your biggest fear? Giving up? Being misunderstood? Dying live? Your cameras breaking?

The biggest fear I had was of failing to complete the project.

77. If somebody wanted to have the experience of radical self-reflection that the project creates the environment for, how long do you think they would have to stream for?

I think a few weeks of lifestreaming and analyzing one's past streams is probably enough to experience radical self-reflection.

Logistics

78. Were you self-taught or did you have professional help to learn how to broadcast live streams?

Most of what I learned about livestreaming came from online videos and articles, but I did pay for one professional, hourlong consultation as well.

Everything else came from personal experience.

79. What was the total cost of doing the project for a year?

I spent somewhere around $30,000 doing the project, and probably about $12,500 of that was directly related to livestreaming.

80. If YouTube is not the ideal platform for life streaming, what would be, and what would it need that YouTube doesn't provide?

YouTube is actually pretty good for lifestreaming, but the ideal platform would probably have to have features like direct messaging, community pages, tailored copyright policies, more lenient content guidelines, and archiving for streams of any length.

81. Looking to the future—will 5G make life streaming any easier? Would that have been a game changer for your project?

5G has the potential to be a game changer if it makes long-term lifestreaming possible with mobile rigs like smartphones.

General

82. At what point and for what reason did you decide to add a bathroom cam?

I decided to add a bathroom camera once I felt capable of integrating it into the project.

The reason I added it was that I wanted to stream all aspects of an individual's life for a year straight.

83. Were there any rules or boundaries you set for yourself that you ended up changing or breaking?

Yes, but I stuck pretty close to the vision that I had from the beginning.

84. There were some rare moments during the stream where you handed the backpack over to someone else—how did that feel?

It felt nice, but it was also scary to hand over something that meant so much to me.

85. What were the biggest challenges during the process?

The three biggest challenges, in order, were keeping the stream functional, digesting the contents of past livestreams, and managing personal relationships while lifestreaming.

86. What parts of the lifestream experience did you enjoy the most?

The things I enjoyed most were always feeling like I was doing something important, the audience interaction, and experiences, like the New York trip, that I got to have because of the project.

87. Favorite podcast about the project?

"Once Upon a Time in College Station"

Recent Reflections

88. Is there anything that you were hoping to get out of the project that you didn't?

Wealth and fame, but I'm glad about what I got now.

89. What is your vision for these streams?

I want the Michael Gerry Live Stream archive to remain freely accessible to everyone for as long as possible.

90. Do you miss broadcasting your life all the time?

Sometimes, but I'm grateful to be doing what I'm doing now.

91. What was the most memorable moment during streaming?

The thing I remember the most from the project was the farewell speech at the end of the year.

Life After the Stream

92. Describe your journey after the stream—was it hard to adjust to living a normal life?

Yes, it was hard.

But at first, everything was really easy.

93. What were the consequences of including the NSFW aspects?

The primary consequences of including the NSFW aspects were more personal messages and more attention for the project as a whole.

94. Are you mentally stable?

Yes

95. What do now?

What I'm obligated to

96. How has it impacted your daily life?

I'm sober because of the project, and I think more about life.

Logistically, though, writing this book and having the support of the Michael Gerry Live Stream audience have both been big impacts as well.

97. In the near future, will we have a new project of yours?

That depends on your definition of project.

But, essentially, yes.

98. At this point, post project, how do you feel?

Fine

Season Two

99. Why didn't you continue?

Because I wanted a chance to have a normal life.

100. Will you ever stream again in the future (perhaps a scaled down version of the project)?

Maybe.

I think if I did it again I would do it in virtual reality.

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For more information:
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